We Claim:

1. A case for holding a laptop computer or similar relatively delicate instrument having opposed outer surfaces which can be gripped, the case having a main storage compartment defined by at least some of the sides of the case sized to receive the laptop computer to be carried, and at least an access opening into the main storage compartment, the improvement comprising a system for automatically gripping the opposed main surfaces of the laptop computer, whereby the laptop computer can be held away from at least some of the sides of the case to help prevent damage to the laptop computer should the case fall.

2. A carrying case as set forth in Claim 1 wherein the laptop computer may be passed through the access opening to place the laptop computer within the main packing compartment, the system for automatically gripping being mounted within the main packing compartment to move from a closed position wherein the system engages the opposed sides of the laptop computer to an open position when the case access opening is opened.

3. A carrying case as set forth in Claim 2 wherein the system for automatically gripping is configured to move from an open position to a closed position wherein the system grips the opposite faces of the laptop computer when the access opening into the main packing compartment moves from an open position to a closed position.

4. A carrying case as set forth in Claim 2 wherein the access opening is a clamshell-type hinged opening, including a hinge at and along one side of the opening and a latch for holding the clamshell opening closed at an opposite side, and wherein the system for automatically gripping the laptop computer includes means for mechanically connecting the system with said clamshell opening.

5. A carrying case as set forth in Claim 4 further including a generally rigid peripheral frame surrounding one of a pair of opposed open shell constructions.

6. A carrying case as set forth in Claim 5 wherein said open shell construction includes a central panel of a relatively flexible fabric attached to said frame, the system for automatically gripping being connected to said frame in a manner such that when the system grips the laptop computer, pressure is not directly applied to the relatively flexible fabric, such that the system transfers the closing force from the clamshell-type opening to the system for automatically gripping.

7. A carrying case as set forth in Claim 1 wherein said system for automatically gripping includes gripping members, at least one of said gripping members moving in response to opening and closing the access opening into the case.

8. A carrying case as set forth in Claim 7 wherein the case has an overall width dimension, at least one of said gripping members is a bar which extends across the entire width dimension of the carrying case.

9. A system as set forth in Claim 5, wherein the frame includes a pair of opposed sides, the system including at least one relatively rigid bar which extends from one side of said frame to the other opposite side of said frame, said bar includes a high friction surface positioned to contact one of said main surfaces of said laptop computer.

10. A carrying case as set forth in Claim 9 wherein said clamshell-type hinged opening further includes a stay for controlling the hinging of the frame about said hinge, at least one of said bars of said system being connected to said stay.

11. A carrying case as set forth in Claim 10 further including a second gripping member mounted opposite said first gripping bar, said second gripping member being attached to a second open shell construction of said case.

12. A carrying case as set forth in Claim 11 wherein said system includes means for moving said second member relative to the second shell construction in response to opening and closing said clamshell-type hinged opening.

13. A carrying case as set forth in Claim 12 wherein said second shell includes a stay mounted to control the opening of said clamshell-type opening, said second gripping member being mounted at least partially to said stay.

14. A carrying case as set forth in Claim 10 wherein said gripping bar is mounted for rotation relative to said case.

15. A carrying case as set forth in Claim 14 wherein said means for mounting said gripping bar includes spring bias means for holding said gripping member in a first position until a gripping member engages a surface of the laptop computer, said spring bias member permitting the gripping member to rotate when the means for automatically gripping moves from an open position to a closed position.

16. A carrying case as set forth in Claim 10 further including a shock-absorbing pad positioned between the laptop computer contained therein and at least one side of the carrying case.